Library

II

HITCHIN RURAL DISTRICT COUNCIL

ANNUAL REPORT

of the

MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH

for the year

1963

MINISTRY OF HEALTH LIBRARY

PUBLIC HEALTH OFFICIALS:

District Medical Officer of Health (and Divisional Medical Officer for North Herts. Area):

VICTOR R. WALKER, M.B., Ch.B., B.Sc., D.P.H.

Divisional Health Office,
Bedford Road, Hitchin
(Telephone: Hitchin 5041l)

Senior Public Health Inspector and Cleansing Superintendent:

WILLIAM M. MATHEWS, Certs. Joint Board,
Meat and Foods,
San. Science,
Smoke Inspection

Additional Inspectors:

ROBERT B. BOLT, Certs. Joint Board,
Testamur of Inst. of Public Cleansing

LEONARD G. STRIBLEY, Certs. Joint Board,
Meat and Foods

Wm. E. Potter, Clerk to the Council,
Council Offices,
Grammar School Walk, Hitchin
(Telephone: Hitchin 3785)

To the Chairman and Members of the Hitchin Rural District Council

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I present an annual report on the health and sanitary conditions of your district for the year 1963.

In view of the age distribution the local death rate is again favourable (10.5 against 9.8 in 1962) and application of the supplied comparability factor gives a 'standardised' rate of 10.9 (England and Wales 1963 - 12.2).

It is of interest that the return of local deaths tabulated by the Registrar General shows that 76% occurred at ages of 65 years or over, with 47% at ages of 75 years or over.

The local birth rate (15.2) again falls below the national rate (18.2). The local stillbirth rate for 1963 was considerably above that for England and Wales but the infant mortality figure (11.4) falls much below the national figure (20.9).

There was during the year an almost complete local absence of serious infectious disease.

I would again acknowledge having received from your chief officers every consideration and help during the year. In the compilation of the report I would acknowledge the help of your Senior Public Health Inspector, Mr. W. M. Mathews, who is wholly responsible for the sections touching upon sanitary environment.

I am, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Your obedient servant,

V. R. WALKER

District Medical Officer of Health

July 1964

LOCAL STATISTICS

Area (in acres)	81,324
Home Population - Registrar-General's estimate for mid-1963 ...	23,150
Number of inhabited houses at 1st April 1964 (estd.)	7,610
Rateable value - 1st April 1964	£768,092
Sum represented by Penny Rate (estimate 1964/5)	£2,998

EXTRACTS FROM VITAL STATISTICS FOR THE YEAR 1963

LIVE BIRTHS

	Totals	Male	Female
Legitimate	332	173	159
Illegitimate	20	10	10
	352	183	169

	HITCHIN RURAL DISTRICT	Comparable rate for England and Wales
Rate per 1,000 population	15.2	18.2

Illegitimate Live Births per cent of total live births 5.7

STILL BIRTHS

	Totals	Male	Female
Legitimate	10	7	3
Illegitimate	1	-	1
	11	7	4

Rate per 1,000 total (live and still) births	30.3	17.3

TOTAL LIVE AND STILL BIRTHS

Total	Male	Female
363	190	173

DEATHS

Total	Male	Female
244	124	120

Rate per 1,000 population	10.5	12.2

INFANT DEATHS

	Total	Male	Female
Under 1 week	3	1	2
At 1 - 4 weeks	-	-	-
At 4 - 52 weeks	1	1	-
	4	2	2

		HITCHIN RURAL DISTRICT	Comparable rate for England and Wales
Infant Mortality Rates			
Total infant deaths per 1,000 total live births		11.4	20.9
Legitimate infant deaths per 1,000 legitimate live births ...	12.0		
Illegitimate infant deaths per 1,000 illegitimate live births ...	0.0		
Neo-natal Mortality Rate (deaths under 4 weeks per 1,000 total live births)		8.5	14.2
Early Neo-natal Mortality Rate (deaths under 1 week per 1,000 total live births)	8.5		
Perinatal Mortality Rate (stillbirths and deaths under 1 week combined per 1,000 total live and still births)	38.6		
Maternal Mortality (including abortion)			
Number of deaths	None		
Rate per 1,000 total live and still births		0.0	0.28

Comment on Vital Statistics

The estimated local mid-year population again shows a small increase (90).

Total live births numbered 352, a figure 2 above that for 1962, and total deaths 244 against 226 in the previous year.

Principal causes of Death

Of the total, 99 were attributed to Heart and other Circulatory Diseases, 40 to Vascular Lesions of the Nervous System, 37 to Cancer (all sites) and 22 to Respiratory Diseases. Deaths from Cancer of the Lung or Bronchus numbered 11 (10 males and 1 female) and from Motor Vehicle Accidents 7 (5 males and 2 females).

SECTION B

General Provision of Health Services

No important change occurred during the year.

SECTION C

Staff

No changes have occurred in the administrative staff during the year. However, the Council considered it prudent to authorise the recruitment of a further clerical assistant (part time) in the department due to the increase in the work likely to be encountered from the commencement of the Offices, Shops and Railway Premises Act 1963. This new assistant is likely to start in the second half of 1964.

Sanitary Circumstances of the Area

Water Supplies

Reports upon treated water samples taken by the Lee Valley Water Company continued to come through at monthly intervals and were reported formally to the Public Health Committee. During 1963, 406 bacteriological and 60 chemical samples were taken and all were found to conform to the standards of purity considered suitable for a public supply. No serious case was found during the year where a detailed investigation of a defect necessitated joint action by the Company and the Council. However, on one occasion, water taken from an extensive private supply was found to be below the high standard of a public supply, but this had corrected itself when check samples were obtained later.

Part of the Lee Valley Water Company's report reads as follows:-

(a) The water supply of the area has been satisfactory (i) in quality and (ii) in quantity.

(b) 16 Chemical and 80 Bacteriological examinations of raw water were made, and the results were satisfactory in every case. With reference to treated water, you will have received the monthly reports from the Chief Chemist and Bacteriologist which contains full details. The fluoride content of the various supplies within the Rural District of Hitchin is invariably recorded as 'less than 0.2 parts per million'. This, of course, from a clinical point of view, can be ignored.

(c) The waters are not liable to have plumbo-solvent action.

(d) ..... no cases of contamination occurred.

(e) The number of properties supplied is shown on the attached schedule (given below). It is not possible to give separate figures for those properties supplied direct from the mains and those supplied by means of standpipes.

(f) The estimated population supplied is 22,710.

Number of Properties supplied

Parish	No. Props.	Parish	No. Props.
Ashwell	454	Lilley	145
Barkway	170	Newnham	15
Barley	176	Nuthampstead	32
Bygrave	81	Offley	412
Caldecote	Nil	Pirton	297
Clothall	35	Preston	99
Codicote	631	Radwell	24
Graveley	103	Reed	73
Hexton	44	Rushden	62
Hinxworth	74	St.Ippollitts	434
Holwell	148	St.Paul's Walden	296
Ickleford	334	Sandon	156
Kelshall	35	Therfield	135
Kimpton	474	Wallington	42
King's Walden	310	Weston	307
Knebworth	1004	Wymondley	344
Langley	38		

Total - 6984

Other samples, taken by the Public Health Department, had results as shown below -

	No. taken	Satis-factory	Unsatis-factory	Doubtful
1. Bulk Supplies from -				
Lee Valley Water Co.	6	6	-	-
2. Private Sources	62	47	14	1
	68	53	14	1

It is of interest that this year, the proportion of unsatisfactory samples found has been much less than in earlier years. Such results are always used to secure improvements or to induce connection to the public mains if this is possible.

Public Swimming Baths

There are no public swimming baths in the Hitchin Rural District but one private school built its own installation during the year. The department advised upon several matters in this case and samples of the water taken proved to be satisfactory.

Sewerage and Sewage Disposal

Further schemes have been completed during the last twelve months but it is beginning to appear doubtful whether the Council's five year programme will be completed to time. The sewerage and sewage disposal schemes for Breachwood Green and Kimpton have been completed and the sewering of the village of Peters Green which connects to Kimpton has also been carried out. The sewerage and sewage disposal scheme for the village of Weston has commenced and the contractors are making good progress. It has at last been possible to seek tenders for the Codicote scheme which, it will be recalled, is to connect through Welwyn sewers to Ryemeads. It is hoped that work will commence on the Graveley and Newnham schemes during the course of the next twelve months and preparation of a combined joint scheme for the villages of Kelshall, Therfield and Reed has been commenced. Messrs. D. Balfour & Sons are proceeding with the design of the schemes for Barkway, St.Ippollitts and Wymondley.

In view of the large amount of public works being undertaken at the present time throughout the country it is becoming increasingly difficult to obtain an adequate labour force to ensure speedy completion of contract works.

Public Cleansing Services

Refuse Collection and Disposal

For another year, the staff recruitment position has kept up fairly well although there was a little falling off in this respect from November onwards.

Tip vehicle KRO 847 was withdrawn from service entirely in September. A report by the Chief Officers was acted upon by the Council in December and orders were placed for the delivery of a new tip control vehicle, a new cesspool emptying machine and a third packing-type refuse collecting vehicle. All these were thought likely to arrive in the first half of 1964 and, following a period of trial, the Council were prepared to consider the possibility of extending the area of weekly collection.

It will be recalled that the existing refuse collection system started in 1948 and it ran until the snow of the 1961-62 winter before it was disrupted for the first time. The winter of 1962-63 proved to be the

most fearsome for years and again the service was seriously harassed. It says much for the men on outside duties that despite three long months of ferocious frost, ice and snow, only one week's collection had to be abandoned.

In September, the Council were able to commence the tipping of refuse at Messrs. Stutley's pit at Little Wymondley. This was a big relief as space for tipping in the south-west part of the district was getting scarce. The northern part of the area remained an outstanding difficulty, and many enquiries made for tipping land came to nothing. The result was that it became imperative to keep the existing Ashwell tip going and this could only be done by trenching using the tip tractor.

The figures relating to the work performed are shown below -

Refuse Collected

Year	No. of Loads	Approx. weight of all materials collected	Vehicle mileage (inc. Foreman's van)
1961	2148	4214 tons	62,769 (one Paxit)
1962	1957	4796 "	52,877 (two Paxits)
1963	1890	5526 "	53,372 (" ")

Salvage Despatches

The year 1963 saw an improvement in the freedom to send salvage to the Board Mills and this is reflected in the figures that follow:-

1961 - 115 tons collected and sold - £973.15. 5d.
1962 - 83 " " " " - £688.13.11d.
1963 - 120 " " " " - £978.12. 9d.

Cesspool Emptying and Night-soil Collection

For a further year the peak period between March and July was satisfactorily handled by bringing into service the third (and spare) vehicle. It is of interest to note from the statistics below that the volume of work at Council houses and Council sewage works went down a little. As the new schemes for the main drainage of villages come into operation, it is hoped to see some reduction also in the figures in columns 2 and 3.

The following figures summarise the work performed -

	Number of cesspools emptied at -					
	Houses in private ownership		Council Houses		Loads from Sewage Works	Pails emptied
Year	Free	Chargeable	Free	Chargeable		
1961	961	477	20	118	785	5284
1962	1000	466	18	119	777	5973
1963	1074	510	16	100	636	6347

Prevention of Damage by Pests Act 1949

The Joint Pests Control scheme with Welwyn Rural District Council was continued during the year and gave satisfactory results.

Warfarin 5 was the principal bait used for safety reasons, occasional use being made of the standard poisons - zinc phosphide and arsenic. For sewer treatments, sodium fluoracetamide was used also.

The heavier infestations that were discovered were quite considerable in extent and no doubt the hard winter had a lot of influence upon this circumstance.

During the year, the new Animals (Cruel Poisons) Act 1962 came into operation, with the result that red squill, strychnine and yellow phosphorus were no longer usable as rodenticides. Of these, only red squill affected this Council and even this had not been used for several years.

Details of the work done are as follows:-

SUMMARY FOR THE PERIOD JANUARY 1st to DECEMBER 31st 1963

DISTRICT	NUMBER OF HOURS WORKED					
	SEWERS	TIPS ETC.	PRIVATE DWELLINGS	BUSINESS PREMISES	AGRIC. LAND ETC.	TOTAL
HITCHIN R.D.C.	111	785½	497½	71½	144½	1610
WELWYN R.D.C.	-	86¾	177½	15	5	284¼
	111	872¼	675	86½	149½	1894¼

Other figures -

Total mileage covered - 12,006
Petrol used - 314 gals.
Approx.M.P.G. - 38.24

Time spent on vehicle maint. receiving instructions, reports on visits, bait handling etc.	231½
Total hours worked	2125¾

The Animals (Boarding Establishments) Act 1963

This new Act was due to come into force on January 1st 1964 and the necessary work of preparation to implement its provisions had to be made during the year.

Atmospheric Pollution

A considerable amount of study was given to the requirements of the national survey to be performed by the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research. Many local authorities will assist with this work and it is proposed to site a recording station at the Kings Walden Pumping Station.

Public Health Inspection of the Area

The following summary gives details of visits made and inspections performed. The use of Statutory procedure continues to be kept to the essential minimum. The number of visits and inspections for all purposes was 3107, detailed as follows in comparison with the year 1962 -

	1962	1963
General Sanitation etc.		
Water Supply	46	74
Drainage	585	453
Cowsheds, Stables, Piggeries etc.	46	36
Ponds and Ditches	28	43
Tents, Vans and Sheds (inc. Caravan Sites etc. Act 1960)	223	196
Factories, Workplaces and Outworkers	136	110
Bakehouses	8	5
Licensed Premises	36	39
Refuse Collection and Disposal (including Salvage)	331	348
Rodent Control	330	179
Atmospheric Pollution	40	26
Schools	9	10
Shops	45	56
Petroleum Regulations	205	239
Noise Nuisances	14	8
National Assistance Act (Burial of the Dead)	13	12
Animal (Boarding Establishments) Act 1963	-	7
Miscellaneous Visits	35	55
Housing		
Public Health Act - visits paid	773	725
Housing Acts - " "	540	325
Filthy or Verminous premises - visits paid	28	20
Miscellaneous Housing visits	20	32
Infectious Diseases etc.		
Enquiries in cases of Infectious Disease	19	1
Visits re Disinfection	3	-
Food Poisoning	6	5
Meat and Food Inspection (inc. inspection of premises)		
Slaughterhouses (inc. proposed slaughterhouses)	14	3
Butchers	21	21
Dairies and Milk Distributors	4	3
Poultry and Egg Packing Stations	16	3
Food Preparing premises	17	11
Grocers	27	19
Greengrocers	4	2
Ice-Cream premises	22	5
Restaurants	16	19
Visits re Mobile Shops	5	3
Miscellaneous Food visits	26	14
	3691	3107

The work of dealing with the sub-standard properties has been continued. The town dweller's desire to have a cottage in the country has again resulted in many poorer type properties being reclaimed for a useful future life at exceptional expense. The department has tried to help in all such cases provided that the ultimate job was a sound building.

SECTION D

Housing

On the 31st December 1963, the number of applications on the Council's waiting list for accommodation was 435, a decrease of 34 over the previous year.

During 1963, 180 new applications were registered. From the lists 105 applicants were re-housed, and 109 applications were cancelled, either at the request of the applicants or because of the failure of applicants to re-register and to reply to enquiries as to whether they still needed accommodation.

The Council have pursued their policy of transferring families from one type of house to another of more suitable size. Elderly couples and people living alone in three-bedroom houses have been re-housed in bungalows and flats, thus making available these houses for larger families.

Also during the year the Council completed the erection of a block of twenty flats for old people at Deanscroft, Knebworth, which proved to be a popular and successful venture, being occupied immediately prior to Christmas.

New Houses etc.

The number of private dwellings provided by new construction during the year was 66; the number of housing units provided for the Council during the year was 48.

In addition to the Old Persons' flatlets at Knebworth, referred to above, work was completed on the sixty dwellings at Offley and commenced on the erection of houses, bungalows and flats in Ashwell, together with twenty-four two-bedroom flats in Knebworth. It is anticipated that tenders for dwellings at Ickleford and Kimpton will be received early in 1964.

Work also continued on the modernisation of the Council's 1919 and 1924 houses, but due to shortage of labour among the contractors and staffing difficulties, very little progress indeed was made. Towards the end of the year it was possible to appoint a Chief Architectural Assistant and it is hoped that progress next year will be far more satisfactory.

Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act 1960

The total number of caravans in the district is approximately 184 on 57 sites. This position compares with 161 in 1959.

The effect of the Act now appears to have been to reduce the number of caravans kept in small groups and to channel them on to larger, better planned sites. Also, the size of individual vans seems to be increasing considerably, some being over 30 ft. in length.

Common Lodging Houses

There are no Common Lodging Houses in the area.

SECTION E

Food

(a) Slaughterhouses

There are no slaughterhouses operating in the Council's district. Two enquiries were made regarding the possibility of opening new premises but neither came to anything by the end of the year.

(b) Inspection of Meat and other Foods

Information regarding food premises in the district is given below:-

Type of Business	No. in District
Grocers and Confectioners	81
Butchers (inc. cooked meats)	16
Bakers and Confectioners	9
Fishmongers (wet fish)	3
Fried fish shops	1
Fruiterers, Greengrocers and Confectioners	7
Confectioners	5
Cafes, Restaurants and Catering Establishments	12
Public Houses	73
Off-licence	7
Bottling plant	1
Dairies (producer/retailers)	2
Other premises from which milk is sold	10
Egg packing station	1
Poultry packing stations	2

There are no premises in the district registered under the Food and Drugs Act 1955 for the Manufacture of Ice-Cream, but there are 87 establishments that are registered for the sale thereof. Under the heading of the "Preparation or Manufacture of Preserved Foods etc." 40 premises are registered of which 10 are not now in active use. There were approximately 30 inspections of registered food premises during the year.

The work of inspection and recommendation under the Food Hygiene Regulations etc. continues, including the examination of Plans submitted.

The heavy snow in the early days of January had the unfortunate effect of immobilising a cold room at one of the poultry packing establishments, with the result that it was necessary for the department to condemn as unfit for food, 2 tons 2 cwts. 10 lbs. of poultry and poultry joints. Although the routine inspection of general foodstuffs continued throughout the year, it was not found necessary to condemn anything further.

(c) Milk

The number of Dairies registered remains at 2.

(d) Food Poisoning

There was one case of Food Poisoning in the District during the year (see Section F).

(e) Factories Act 1961

Information in the form required by the Ministry of Labour is given in the Table that follows.

1. Inspections for purposes of provisions as to health (including inspections made by Public Health Inspectors

PREMISES	No. on Register	Number of - Inspections	Written Notices	Occupiers Prosecuted
(i) Factories in which Secs. 1,2,3,4, and 6 are to be enforced by Local Authorities	11	4	-	-
(ii) Factories not included in (i) in which Sec.7 is enforced by the Local Authority	114	44	-	-
(iii) Other premises in which Sec.7 is enforced by the Local Authority (exl. Outworkers' premises)	8	-	-	-
TOTAL.....	133	48	-	-

2. Cases in which defects were found

	No. of cases in which defects found: Found	Remedied	Referred - To H.M. Inspec.	By H.M. Inspec.	No. of Prosecutions
Want of cleanliness	1	1	-	-	-
Overcrowding	-	-	-	-	-
Unreasonable temperature	-	-	-	-	-
Inadequate ventilation	-	-	-	-	-
Ineffective drainage of floors	-	-	-	-	-
Sanitary Conveniences -					
(a) Insufficient	2	4	-	1	-
(b) Unsuitable or defective	2	1	-	2	-
(c) Not separate for sexes	-	-	-	-	-
Other offences against the Act (excluding Outworkers)	-	-	-	-	-
TOTAL	5	6	-	3	-

Outworkers. There are 32 Outworkers reported in the District, employed on the making of "wearing apparel".

An additional number of 55 visits were made to factory premises, mainly in connection with storage of petroleum, smoke nuisances, rodent infestation etc.

SECTION F

Prevalence of, and Control over, Infectious and other Diseases

Total notifications of acute infectious diseases received during the year (after correction) numbered:- Measles - 286, Scarlet fever - 5, Acute pneumonia - 3, Whooping Cough - 1, Dysentery - 1, and Food Poisoning - 1.

Measles was epidemic inschools during the late Spring months, while the very few cases of scarlet fever were scattered both in place and time, mild in character and confined to infant school age.

The single case of food poisoning on a positive bacteriological finding from the patient had Clost. Welchii as the (presumptive) causative agent.

The whole district was again free during the year from enteric illness or acute poliomyelitis.

Vaccination against Smallpox

With no nationalalarms during the year efforts were directed to obtaining primary vaccination of infants during the second year of life, the recently revised policy recommended by the Ministry of Health.

Immunisation

The standard use of a TRIPLE antigen - against diphtheria, whooping cough and tetanus - continued to be urged in three separate injections between 6 and 18 months, with a fourth (booster) dose at the age of infant school entry. There is locally a high degree of parental acceptance.

Against poliomyelitis the routine exhibition to infants of three separate doses of SABIN vaccine by the mouth continued unchanged. With the near-disappearance nationally of reported cases there is a considerable percentage of missed appointments for second and third oral doses, possibly through parental forgetfulness since a vaccine dose by mouth is now so undramatic. It is expected that in future an extra (booster) dose of such anti-poliomyelitis oral vaccine will be offered to children and other contacts whenever and wherever a single case of the disease has been confirmed.

TUBERCULOSIS

New Cases and Deaths during the year 1963

Age Periods	New Cases				Deaths			
	Respiratory		Non-Respiratory		Respiratory		Non-Respiratory	
	M.	F.	M.	F.	M.	F.	M.	F.
0 - 1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2 - 5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
5 - 15	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
15 - 25	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
25 - 35	-	-	1	-	-	1*	-	-
35 - 45	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
45 - 55	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
55 - 65	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
65 and over	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Not known	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
TOTALS	-	1	2	2	-	1	-	-

*This death was apparently credited in the tabulation of the Registrar General to the Hitchin Urban area.

Comment: New local notifications of respiratory disease are seen to be very low, confined to one elderly female case.

One death (young adult female) occurred in the local population during the year.

V. R. WALKER

District Medical Officer of Health

July 1964